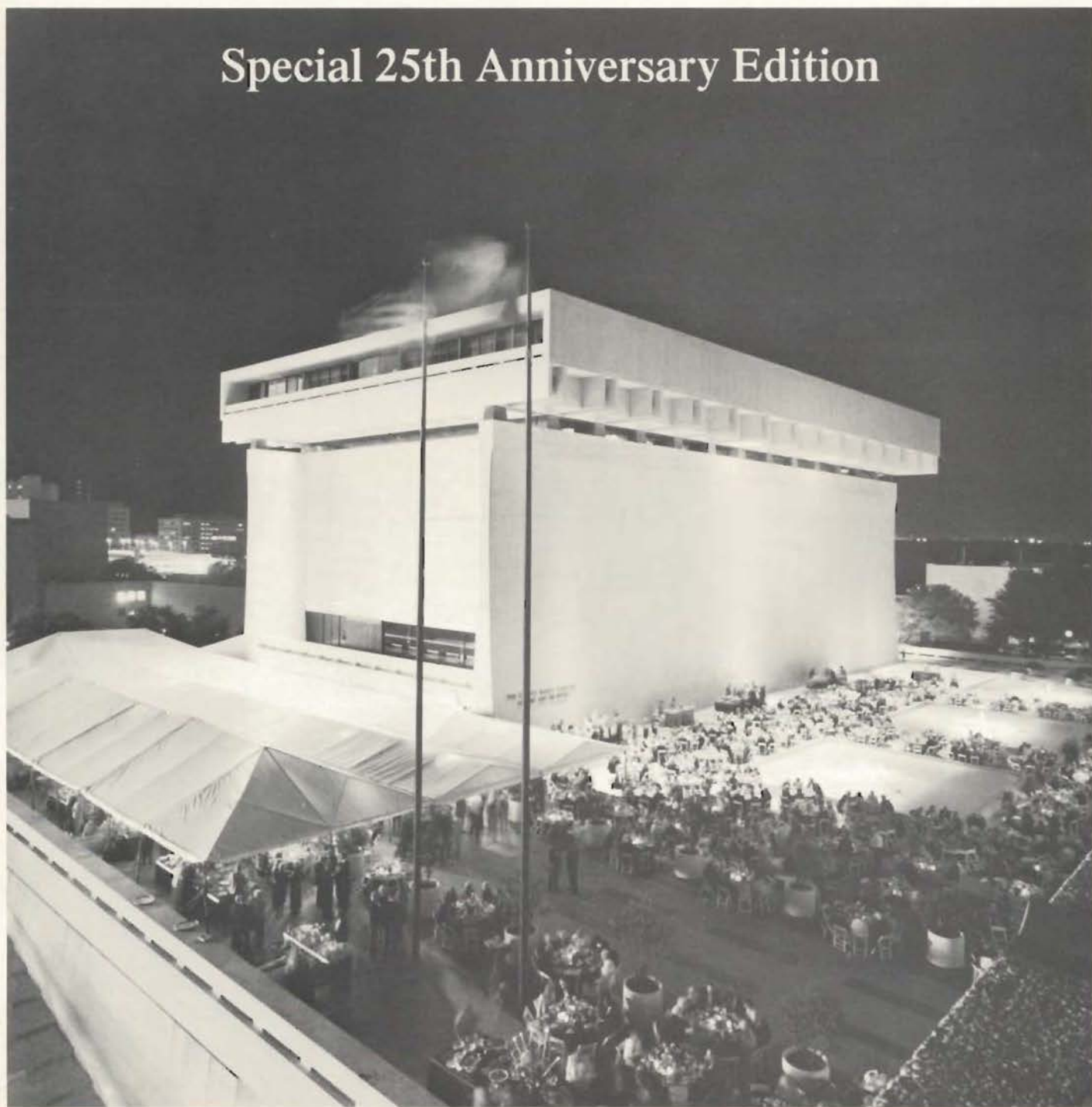


# AMONG FRIENDS *of LBJ*

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## Special 25th Anniversary Edition





# Great Society Alumni Gather

The planning began two years ago when the Board of Directors of the LBJ Foundation decided that Lyndon Johnson's inauguration as elected President should be remembered and commemorated in 1990, the 25th anniversary year of that event.

It all culminated in a series of reunions and conferences that lit up the spring for alumni of the Great Society and members of the Friends of the LBJ Library. Men and women who served in the Johnson Administration in every capacity, as cabinet officers, White House assistants, telephone operators, secretaries and Secret Service agents, plumbers and calligraphers—1,000 in all—gathered at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington on April 6. A month later, some of them joined members of the Friends of the LBJ Library for a celebration that saw 1,600 people dining on the Library's plaza (see cover photo).

At both the Washington and Austin events, a new film titled "LBJ: A Remembrance," produced by Charles Guggenheim, was shown. Told in the words and voices of persons who knew and served with the President, it is an intimate and personal look at the man behind the Great Society. Also, on both occasions, the actor Laurence Luckinbill presented excerpts from his one-man show on LBJ which he has performed in communities across the country during the last two years.

In both Washington and Austin, group oral history sessions were conducted to record reminiscences of the 36th President, and at the Library a symposium traced the development and results of the Johnson Administration programs.

The festivities ended with a nostalgic "round-up" at the LBJ Ranch for those veterans of the administration who made the trip to Texas.

A report on all these activities is presented in the following pages.



**A bountiful buffet table in the Grand Ballroom of the Mayflower Hotel is the centerpiece of the reunion in Washington.**



## in Washington and Austin



Laurence Luckinbill eerily evokes LBJ both with his makeup (above) and his performance. At right, he has a word with a cowering Cactus Pryor who, in the program at the Library, has just given a review of Johnson wit and humor.



Lady Bird Johnson meets with the LBJ Cabinet members assembled for the Washington reunion. They are: Willard Wirtz (Labor), Alexander Trowbridge (Commerce), Joseph Barr (Treasury), John Gardner (HEW), Clark Clifford (Defense), Robert Wood (HUD), Alan Boyd (Transportation), Robert McNamara (Defense), Anthony Celebrezze (HEW), Orville Freeman (Agriculture), and (seated) Henry Fowler (Treasury).

# Reception at White House and Capitol



President and Mrs. Bush held a reception at the White House for Mrs. Johnson and members of the Johnson personal and official families. Paying tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Bush called LBJ "a towering and passionate figure" who "tried with all his heart to be the best President that this country ever had for the people who are pressed against the wall, whose cries are not heard. But he heard. Lyndon Johnson heard." Thanking the President for his tribute and for the reception, Mrs. Johnson said: "I will remember it always."

On Capitol Hill, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (right) and Senator Edward Kennedy (far right), among other legislators, hailed Lyndon Johnson's accomplishments in the field of education.



The reunions are not only food, drink and socializing. There's music, too, as Senator Charles Robb and his wife, presidential daughter Lynda, demonstrate.





The LBJ Ranch on the banks of the Pedernales River, which for five years in the 1960s was known as the Western White House, is the site of the festivities' final "round-up." The reunions, Congressman Jake Pickle said later, were "more of a revival. I have never seen so much hugging and kissing and pride expressed in any similar reunion." Above, Mrs. Johnson greets Bess Abell, who served as White House Social Secretary during the Johnson years, and her husband Tyler, who was Assistant Postmaster General. At right, Frank Wolfe positions Mrs. Johnson for a picture with Secret Service agents who covered members of the First Family.





# Conference Explores the Roots and Results of the Great Society

The symposium at the Library looked back at the adventure of a quarter century ago and probed the answers to these questions:

- What were the programs that constituted the Great Society?
- How were they conceived?
- How were they enacted into law?
- What was their impact?
- What is their implication for the future?

The proceedings of the symposium will be published later. The following pages attempt to give a flavor of the discussions.

Tom Wicker set the stage with a vivid glimpse into the America of the early 1960s: It "was not...a smiling and contented land for a new President to look out upon."

The education system was in crisis, with children dropping out by the millions each year, and too many schools unprepared to handle the growing population.

Unemployment was dangerously high.

The health care system was also critical, with no adequate assistance for the poor and elderly. (Casting his own thoughts back to that time, John Gardner said: "You'll encounter occasionally people who cry for the good old days when each family looked after its own aging members...In that time, old age and poverty were firmly linked, and a good many old folks went 'over the hill to the poor house'...A great many others were mendicants in their own family. Don't talk to me about the good old days.")

The physical environment was "being degraded at an alarming rate."

"The ancient, cancerous American race problem ate at the nation's vitals," with segregation the rule, and black citizens disenfranchised in the South.

Poverty was rampant throughout the nation.

Joe Califano reviewed the "awesome record" of the Great Society—some "400 pieces of landmark legislation," including:

- Protection of the consumer in the marketplace; programs to provide safer cars, tires and highways; a Truth-in-Packaging law; a Child Safety Act to protect "the child whose toys and cribs threaten serious injury or even death"; Truth-in-Lending laws; safeguards against flammable fabrics; the Wholesome Meat and Poultry Acts.
- Civil rights laws to outlaw racial discrimination in public accommodations, employment, schools and housing, and to assure every citizen's constitutional right to vote.
- Legislation to control roadside junkyards, to landscape highways, and "to raise America's consciousness about preserving the land God entrusts to each generation for just a few years."
- Standards for automobile emissions and the first serious federal action on solid waste disposal and water, air and noise pollution.
- Coverage under the federal minimum wage for millions of Americans working for inadequate wages.



Panel Discussion: Douglass Cater, Liz Carpenter, George Christian, Bill Moyers, Jake Pickle, Elspeth Rostow, Sargent Shriver and Jack Valenti



• A flood of legislation to improve living conditions and to "provide lasting escape from poverty."

• 45 education bills ranging from Head Start to help for college students.

• Medicare and other legislation to give Americans an opportunity for better health care and longer lives.

Lyndon Johnson determined in his first days in office that he would complete some of the programs of his predecessors. Medical insurance for the elderly had been on the Democratic agenda since Harry Truman's time. The hope of federal aid for education went back as far as Franklin Roosevelt. The Civil Rights law to outlaw discrimination in public accommodations had been proposed by John F. Kennedy. The idea of a War on Poverty had been born in the last days of the Kennedy Administration.

Johnson embraced these and used the force of his office to get them, and others as well, through the Congress.

But one—federal aid to education—had defied all past efforts to find a formula that would overcome long-entrenched barriers. Johnson also wanted to expand the agenda with new measures to improve the condition of American life. Larry Levinson described how he went about it: "A President who has sometimes been looked at as an anti-intellectual...reached out to the finest, the brightest and the best in American life to help shape his programs—cabinet officers, mayors, governors, business leaders, union leaders, professors, foundation heads, scientists and economists, from all across the country."

"He thought," said Charles Haar, "that if you got groups together, if you listened to ideas...by listening and sifting, you could come up with solutions and answers."

Johnson laid down two operating rules for the "task forces" he created. One was that they operate in secrecy. This sometimes led to difficulties, for one problem with working with the "best minds," Hale Champion recalled, was that "they

## THE PARTICIPANTS

**John Brademas**, former member of Congress; president of New York University

**Joseph A. Califano**, Special Assistant to LBJ; attorney, author

**Liz Carpenter**, Staff Director for Lady Bird Johnson; writer; lecturer

**Douglass Cater**, Special Assistant to LBJ; retiring president of Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland

**Hale Champion**, member of LBJ task force on health; lecturer at JFK School

**George Christian**, Press Secretary to LBJ; writer, political consultant

**William H. Cunningham**, president, University of Texas at Austin

**Rodney Ellis**, graduate, LBJ School of Public Affairs; state senator, Texas

**Thomas Ferguson**, professor of Political Science, University of Massachusetts

**Rodolfo Rene Fuentes**, law student, University of California at Berkeley

**Betty Furness**, Special Assistant to LBJ for Consumer Affairs; reporter for WNBC-TV, New York

**James Kenneth Galbraith**, professor, LBJ School of Public Affairs

**John W. Gardner**, Secretary of HEW in Johnson Administration; Professor in Public Service at Stanford University

**Charles M. Haar**, Assistant Secretary, HUD, in Johnson Administration; professor of law at Harvard University

**Barbara Jordan**, former member of Congress; professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs

**Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.**, former president of the National Urban League; attorney, Washington, D.C.

**Nicholas deB. Katzenbach**, Attorney General and Under Secretary of State in the Johnson Administration; attorney, Washington, D.C.

**Lawrence E. Levinson**, Deputy Counsel to LBJ; Senior Vice President of Paramount Communications, Washington, D.C.

**Albert A. Martine**, President and General Manager of Martine Broadcasting, Inc., Beckley, West Virginia

**Harry Middleton**, Staff Assistant to LBJ; Director of LBJ Library

**Bill Moyers**, Special Assistant to LBJ; Executive Editor of Public Affairs Television, Inc.

**Charles Murray**, Fellow with the Manhattan Institute for Policy; author

**Lawrence O'Brien**, Special Assistant to LBJ and Postmaster General; consultant, New York City

**J. J. "Jake" Pickle**, member of Congress, holding seat once held by LBJ

**Elspeth D. Rostow**, professor, University of Texas at Austin; former dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs

**Barefoot Sanders**, Legislative Counsel to LBJ; U. S. District Judge for the Northern District Court of Texas, Dallas

**John E. Schwarz**, professor of Political Science, University of Arizona

**Max R. Sherman**, dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs; former state senator, Texas

**Sargent Shriver**, Director of the Peace Corps and of the Office of Economic Opportunity under LBJ; attorney, Washington, D. C.

**Vernon L. Sykes**, member of the Ohio House of Representatives

**Jack Valenti**, Special Assistant to LBJ; President and Chief Executive Officer of the Motion Picture Association of America

**Charls E. Walker**, adjunct Professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs; Chairman of Walker Associates

**Lee C. White**, Special Counsel to LBJ; attorney, Washington, D.C.

**Thomas Wicker**, journalist, New York Times



are also frequently attached to big mouths."

Why the emphasis on secrecy? One reason undoubtedly was Johnson's reluctance to see possibilities aired before he had made a decision. (There were exceptions. Haar remembered that after the task force on which he served developed an idea for a model cities program, "suddenly the *New York Times* carried a story about [it]...and we [were sure] there goes the whole game." The task force members asked each other: "Who leaked it? Who talked? And then suddenly we got a call: 'It's all right. It's o.k.' You know who turned out to be the leaker? The President.")

But the other reason was consideration for the task force members, according to Haar. "The President kept insisting, 'I want the merits. I know your positions. I know it would be embarrassing for you to say something which your union or the Better Business Bureau or the Business Council would repudiate. But here, I would like you to discuss the merit [in secrecy].'"

Johnson's second instruction was described by John Gardner, who before he joined LBJ's Cabinet chaired the task force that found the solution to federal aid to education. "He said," Gardner recalled: "'Give me ideas. Don't worry about the politics. I'll handle the politics.'"

Bill Moyers, who helped LBJ put together the original task forces,

agreed. "I raised the same question. I said, 'Don't you want us to try to anticipate what Wilbur Mills will do on Ways and Means, or Richard Russell?' And he said, 'No, you leave the politics to me.' It reminded me of the story about Theodore Roosevelt dying and going to heaven...He asked St. Peter if he could organize a choir. St. Peter said yes. So Teddy Roosevelt said, 'Well, I'll need 10,000 tenors, 10,000 altos and 10,000 sopranos.' And St. Peter said, 'What about bass?' And Theodore Roosevelt said, 'I'll sing bass.' When it came to politics, Lyndon Johnson was going to sing bass, and I was prepared to leave it there."

(Lee White also worked on the task forces in the White House. Hale Champion had a question for him: "We heard a lot [about] the President's invitation to us to ignore politics and let him worry about the politics...[But] I'm told that on occasion he would pick up a report and say, 'What world do these people live in? Have they ever met a congressman?' Is that true?" Tongue firmly in cheek, White replied: "No, of course not.")

"The foundation for the Great Society," said Califano, "was a robust economy." Henry Fowler, who had served as Secretary of the Treasury, concurred. During the Kennedy-Johnson years, he maintained, "the real rate of economic growth was around 4 1/2 to 5 per-



Tom Wicker

cent" which enabled the administration to "provide...the Great Society programs."

"Much of the President's energy," Califano said, went into "reinvigorating the economy."

Given this success in providing the essential economic foundation, it was still necessary to move the programs from blueprint into law. "I'll handle the politics," LBJ had declared. How did he do it?

Much of John Kennedy's programs had been stalled in Congress, but the Kennedy Administration, led by Larry O'Brien, had begun building an "invisible bridge" down Pennsylvania Avenue, which was a more intensive system of communication between the White House and Capitol Hill than ever existed before. Under Johnson, O'Brien completed construction of that bridge, and the two men worked it actively.

The new dynamic was Johnson's knowledge of Congress and its members, and his "love of the legislative process," as Nick Katzenbach put it. "He wanted to be active in it himself." "No detail of the legislative program eluded him," O'Brien said.



Sargent Shriver and Jack Valenti



"For Johnson, Congress was a 24-hour-a-day obsession."

But there was more to it than knowledge of the process. Johnson also knew, understood and appreciated the problems of members of Congress, Barefoot Sanders said. John Brademas concurred: "President Johnson was more preoccupied with the personal approach to members of the House and Senate than any political figure I ever came in touch with...I was always impressed with how [he] understood that Members of Congress had to be concerned with their re-election."

Congressman Jake Pickle had a personal illustration. He had voted for the 1964 Civil Rights bill which, he said, "was not an easy vote for this district." He got home at 3 a.m. to find a message to call the President no matter what time it was. When he reluctantly made the late call, LBJ told him: "I made a pledge to myself I was not going to let this night go by until I could tell you that your President was immensely proud of your vote tonight." "That," said Pickle, "is thoughtfulness and remembrance beyond measure."

There was, of course, another way "he paid attention to how you voted," Brademas recalled. He told of going through the receiving line at a White House function after voting against one of Johnson's proposals: "The President introduced me. 'By the way, John,' he said, 'I'm glad to see that your district got that defense contract this week.' Point Number 1. Point Number 2: 'I'm sorry you couldn't vote with me on the cotton bill.' That is attention to detail."

The next issue of this newsletter will carry more specific information about the book to be published on the symposium. Some persons have indicated that even before publication of the book, they would like to have a transcript of the symposium. Such transcripts can be obtained by sending a check for \$45.00 to Friends of the LBJ Library. For the benefit of those who have asked about video tapes: a set of tapes of the proceedings can be made available for \$183.00.



Joe Califano



Betty Furness



John Gardner



Charles Haar and Bill Moyers



# The Impact of the Great Society



John Brademas leads a panel discussion on the legislative logistics of the Great Society with Nicholas Katzenbach, Barefoot Sanders and Lee White.

The point of all that legislation was, in Califano's words, "to provide for the development of the whole person—body, mind and spirit—to preserve individuality, and enlarge horizons and opportunity."

An ambitious goal. Did it work?

"The Great Society is alive and well," Califano said, "in Medicare and Medicaid, in the air we breathe and the water we drink, in the rivers and lakes we swim in, in the colleges our students attend, in the medical miracles from the National Institutes

of Health, in mass transportation and equal opportunity." Said Vernon Jordan: "The Great Society opened America's doors of democracy wide...[Its] lasting significance is that it touched the lives of America's forgotten millions."

What about the "vilified and ridiculed" War on Poverty? Sargent Shriver asked. "We all know it was a failure, don't we? We've been told that for at least ten years. But the truth is that the War on Poverty created Head Start, the Job Corps, Com-

munity Action, Foster Grandparents, Upward Bound, Community Health Centers, Legal Services [for the poor], VISTA, College Work-Study programs...all still in existence, all still helping millions of people."

Others concurred.

"The War on Poverty finally has been vindicated in full by modern research," James Galbraith declared. "It proved," said Thomas Ferguson, "that you could reduce poverty very substantially." At the very least, said John Schwarz, it is accepted today as "an article of faith by Americans of every political stripe that it is wrong



Liz Carpenter, George Christian and Bill Moyers

for people who try, to live in poverty. No one today opposes this basic belief."

Not everything worked out, as Vernon Jordan put it, "and some of the programs were less than we hoped for." In the "outpouring of legislation and resulting programs," said John Gardner, some of them [were] highly successful, some of them not so successful. "Often," Califano acknowledged, "we failed to recognize that government could not do it all." Bill Moyers agreed: "We really did try to do too much... We erred also in not anticipating what the war [in Vietnam] would do to the energies of the President and the passions of the people and to the conflict in the very soul of this country. And then we just simply ran out of time."

Subtract, then, the failures from the successes. What is left?

"What remains," said Vernon Jordan, "is nothing less than one of the boldest, most compassionate and most enlightened federal efforts in American history."



Mrs. Johnson listens to the program, flanked by her youngest grandchild, Jennifer Robb, and her oldest, Lt. Lyn Nugent.



# He Made a Difference

"Posterity," said Jack Valenti, "fixes a man's place in history not by how many tongues buzzed about him in his lifetime, but how great a factor he was in the changes in the country, whether or not 25 to 50 years later it mattered that he lived. And that is the gauge by which we are going to judge Lyndon Johnson."

Some of those to whom it mattered talked about the changes in their lives. They represented, said Vernon Jordan, who introduced them, "eloquently, clearly, beautifully and beyond a shadow of a doubt, the difference LBJ made."

Albert Martine



"I'm looking forward," said Albert Martine, "to being able to hug Mrs. Johnson and say, 'Thank you for Mr. Johnson.' " And he did. Martine grew up, Vernon Jordan said, "not just poor, but alone, living in ten foster homes before he graduated from high school."

Martine told of a boyhood in New York, where carrying a switchblade to school "was a way of life. There was a war in my neighborhood and the war was survival... We had our own territory, we had nothing else." Somewhere in his early years he realized that "education would get me out." Working at various jobs, he made it through high school and was struggling through college—as "a physical education major because that's about the only thing I could do well. When you grow up in Harlem, you are fast, and I ran track." Then a new federal program—Work Study—and an Opportunity Grant enabled him to train for a career in broadcast journalism and speech communications. He is president of Martine

Broadcasting, and owner of a radio station in West Virginia.

Rodolfo Fuentes



Rodolfo Fuentes grew up in Texas' Rio Grande Valley. Supportive parents and concerned teachers provided invaluable help. "But it all began in a small center in a small rural town in South Texas with a Head Start program." That early Head Start experience gave him, above all else, "confidence." With the help of other federal programs, "I was the first from my whole family on both sides to attend a university." He is now studying law at the University of California at Berkeley.

Vernon Sykes



"I am here," said Vernon Sykes, "to tell you about a little colored boy born in the Mississippi delta in Forrest City, Arkansas... in a wood shack that stood on concrete blocks with a corrugated tin roof, that sat on a stream and had an outhouse and well water and a slop jar." He remembered that boy "looking out across a cotton field trying to figure out what life held for him," of listening to his mother and his alcoholic father fighting in the night. "And one night I ran down the hall. My mother had a rifle drawn, my father's 22. And I stood in the hall and I cried and I begged her not to shoot. But she could not put up with it any more. She pulled the trig-

ger. He did not die. He survived, but I never saw him again for 15 years."

They moved then from familiar land to the "inner city of Akron," a place of "asphalt playgrounds... and a mother on welfare... Trouble, trouble and turmoil. What hope for a little colored boy?"

Hope came first in the War on Poverty's Community Action program which gave counseling services to the family and a job for his mother. Then Upward Bound opened the doors of college to him.

With degrees from three universities, he serves in the Ohio House of Representatives. "It is not so important who I am," he said, "but what I represent. And I'm here today representing the Sykes family and President Johnson, to tell you this story."

Barbara Jordan



"Did Lyndon Johnson make a difference?" asked Barbara Jordan, whose political career was launched by the Voting Rights Act of 1965. "You bet he did. And what a difference. He stripped the federal government of its neutrality and made government an actor on behalf of the people. He said government had to be involved in removing ancient wrongs. Old men straightened their backs because Lyndon Johnson was President. And we African-Americans became so excited about the future because that future has opportunity and hope and justice. Lyndon Johnson made me believe that I could be President of the United States. He told me that. I believed it because he believed it... Lyndon Johnson was saying to me, 'Believe in yourself as I believe in you.' What a statement of faith. That will take you a long way for a very, very long time."



# End of an Era or Door to the Future

The Great Society was founded on an optimism that Johnson carried through his life. In the first symposium held in the LBJ Library—on education—the year before he died, he said: “This country has the money to do anything it has the guts to do and the will to do and the vision to do.”

Is it true?

Exploring this question was the mission of one panel discussion. James K. Galbraith, economist and professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs (and son of John Kenneth Galbraith), took the LBJ statement as the launching pad for a presentation in which he concluded that “we have enough [evidence] to base a confident politics on the belief that great things can be achieved if we are willing to attempt them.” Moreover, he maintained, “over history...the American public has demonstrated that...it is willing to pay [the cost], to fulfill its destiny as a nation.”



Professor Galbraith



The panel was moderated by Elspeth Rostow (left). Other panel members are identified by their place names.





Senator Ellis

He proposed a program to address U.S. social needs and "stabilized the new democracies of Eastern Europe and Latin America"—coincidentally "helping to provide the new export markets that our most advanced and competitive and successful industries vitally need." These undertakings would be financed in two ways. One: cut back on what we are spending to defend Western Europe. ("The world has changed. We're in luck.") The other: "The income tax remains the best tax, the fairest tax, despite its miserable reputation, and changing the rates is an administratively simple measure that does not add a single bureaucrat to the Internal Revenue Service." He confessed that "the polls and the pols are against me and fairly strongly. But I will take refuge in the advice I heard [in previous discussions] to advocate the best course and leave the politics to someone else."

He agreed with Rodney Ellis' objection that "we can't do it all at the same time," and he acknowledged the difficulties as Thomas Ferguson outlined them, but he insisted, "we have an opportunity, an unprecedented opportunity to do something different now...We'll never get another opportunity like this one...I think we should make the effort."

Charles Walker, a prominent Republican economist, maintained that no big social programs could be effectively financed until the nation first deals with its deficit. He proposed eliminating it with a single-rate

value added tax of 5 to 7%, thus raising \$125 to \$175 billion a year.

Galbraith did not share Walker's concern for the deficit as "an absolute obstacle to social progress." But "if he wants to take my program and add to it an additional tax to get the deficit down, then within certain limits, so we don't drive the economy into a recession...and if we can get the interest rate down along with the deficit, I'm willing to discuss [it]."

"This trip," said Walker, "[has been] worthwhile."

Another critic on the right, Charles Murray, who has attacked the Great Society in his book, *Losing Ground*, did not address Galbraith's proposal but instead made one of his own. He suggested restoring to the "poor and disadvantaged" controls over their lives that he said had been taken from them by "a lot of the reforms of the 1960s." Specifically, he wanted,

first, a "generous voucher system" to enable parents to "choose the schools that their kids go to"; second, "freeing up the housing market in the inner cities"—meaning "freeing the ability of landlords to choose who they want to live in their houses" and "getting rid of rent control"; and third, establishing "a court system in which an alleged felon is tried by a jury drawn from within a five block radius of where the crime was committed."

John Schwarz agreed with Galbraith's presentation and its implications for the future: "Some day a leader who combines the power, the compassion and the political acumen of Lyndon Johnson will come along to move the nation to enact programs to make the American ideal nearer reality...[That] leader need only build on the consensus already formed by the Great Society."



Charles Walker (right) noted: "I may not be the only Republican here, but the joint's not jumping with them." He and Charles Murray, a critic of the Great Society, are on either side of John Schwarz, a staunch defender.



# A Look at the Man in Washington and Austin

In two separate sessions, Lyndon Johnson himself was the subject. Members of the press who had covered him when he was President met at the National Press Club in Washington to pool their recollections of him. At the Library in Austin the next month, a mixed group who had known him at various stages of his life did the same thing.

Anecdotes abounded when 14 men and women who had been in the White House press corps turned their attentions back to the Johnson years. "We'll have a little fun," said moderator John Chancellor at the outset, and they did. The stories were amusing, and the laughter was loud.

But there was a seriousness, too, as they recalled the strengths and weaknesses, the foibles and the quirks of the man they had closely watched for five eventful years. Not surprisingly, much of their discussion focused on his relationship with the press—which, it was generally agreed, was not very successful.

"He never quite understood the arms-length relationship" between the President and the press, said Chuck Bailey. "He never accepted it. He never understood that he could not co-opt the White House press corps."

He was always accessible—"so accessible that at times it frightened me," said Ray Scherer. But that accessibility had a price. "He wanted the press to be supportive," Sid Davis said. "He wanted the press to be cheerleaders of some of his programs."

The President's reluctance to let his plans be known in advance had caused considerable exasperation at the time, and it was still well remembered. Chuck Roberts read a memo he had written in 1964: "[LBJ] said, off the record, he has no plans to go anywhere, but he might."

They all agreed that he had what Scherer called an "extraordinary obsession" with the news. "I'm sure no President," said Frank Cormier, "ever paid such close attention to what was said and written about him, or had a thinner skin about it. If you

wrote something that pleased him, you'd probably never hear about it. If you displeased him, you could get a call from him, maybe somebody would bring you the word, or at Christmas time you might get a gift-wrapped empty box."

"We were always hanging him out to dry, so to speak," Chuck Roberts said. "Every evening, every day, we went to press, we went on the air. He paid obsessive attention to what was written about him. So he had this love/hate thing going with the press. He never gave up trying to seduce us, but he'd always get a good lick in when he could."

There was also a unanimous belief that he had a "credibility problem," as Marianne Means put it. "He was a wonderful story teller, but he did love to embellish."

"He did exaggerate," Bob Thompson agreed, "but he was also a very, very proud man, and a man in whom there was a lot of compassion...I think he did not understand when we would write and say [some] things...I remember out at the hospital when he showed [his operation] scar. He thought he was showing the American people what was wrong with him. He was being candid. He

did not understand why the American people reacted as they did."

Despite the problems, it was clear that in many ways they missed him. "Whether we could actually figure out what he was all about," said Fran Lewine, "at least we knew him better than most reporters knew later Presidents...I certainly think the openness and the opportunities for reporters to get to see him and talk to him was something invaluable that is somewhat vanishing."

"We miss his vision," Marianne Means said. "We miss his courage in pursuing that vision despite all the warts we've talked about. Despite the credibility gap, I knew that his goals and his aims for this society and the world came from his heart and he believed everything he said in that regard."

Frank Cormier, who called him a "giant," remembered "very well how we all laughed 25 years ago when Jack Valenti said Lyndon Johnson had extra glands. I'll bet there isn't a person around this table now who won't agree that he had extra glands."

"He did," Chancellor said in conclusion. "He certainly did."



Announcement of session at National Press Club





The panelists and the organizations they represented in the 1960s: Bonnie Angelo (Newhouse National News Service), Chuck Bailey (Minneapolis Tribune), Frank Cormier (Associated Press), Sid Davis (Group W

Westinghouse Broadcasting Co.), Douglas Kiker (New York *Herald Tribune*), Francis Lewine (Associated Press), John Chancellor (NBC), Marianne Means (Hearst Newspapers; *Look Magazine*), Bob

Thompson (Los Angeles *Times*, Hearst), Helen Thomas (United Press International), Hugh Sidey (*Time Magazine*), Ray Scherer (NBC), and Chuck Roberts (*Newsweek Magazine*).



Marianne Means



Helen Thomas



Hugh Sidey



Douglas Kiker



# In Search of LBJ at the Library

John Connally: I think he is probably one of the most complex individuals that we've known in public life and the history of this country. Each of us views him from a different vantage point. Each of us sees him differently, depending on the circumstances under which we knew him. Therefore, we're going to get many, many different pictures of Lyndon Johnson and who he was and what he meant.

**Liz Carpenter:** If you like your President to come packaged and planned and predictable, then LBJ is not your man because actually and quite frankly he was a PR nightmare.

Bill Deason: He was a young man always in a hurry. And then he was a middle-aged man always in a hurry.

**Ray Roberts:** He was a human dynamo. He had enormous mental and physical capacity. And I think he had leadership that I've never seen in anybody else. He was ambitious and he had the ability to achieve his ambitions.

John Connally: No question about it. He was an extremely ambitious man. His whole life was politics. I don't remember him ever reading a book. That isn't to say he wasn't intelligent. That isn't to say he wasn't informed. That isn't to say he wasn't interested. He was committed to succeeding as a politician...When he went to the Senate, the first thing he learned was that he was going nowhere in the Senate unless he had the support of Richard Russell of Georgia [who] was beyond any question the leader of the Senate. He also found out that Richard Russell liked baseball. So Senator Johnson suddenly acquired a very great interest in baseball and he started going to the games with Senator Russell. And they went until Senator Johnson made baseball watching unattractive for Senator Russell. Because all during the baseball game he would talk politics to Senator Russell. Finally Senator Russell quit going to baseball games.

**Bill Moyers:** Anyone who knew him knew he could be abrasive, hard, sometimes callous [and]

deceptive. I saw him deal penalties to his enemies and disappoint his friends, but I never saw him act ruthless in a callous disregard for the humanity of another person or to get his goal at any price...He did have a mean streak. I didn't think it ruthless.

Douglass Cater: I never saw him do a ruthless thing to somebody else.

**Henry Fowler:** About these stories about how demanding and how tough and mean he was, let me say that's not the man I knew...I have never been able to buy this business about Johnson the great, rough brutal taskmaster. To me, he was as good a boss and as understanding a boss as I've ever worked for, and that's quite a few people.

Betty Furness: He was nice to me, unfailingly. He never resisted an opportunity to tell me that he was proud of the work I was doing. He made me feel very, very good about myself.

**Douglass Cater:** I read about other Presidents whose aides never had a meal with him. Hell, it was hard to avoid a meal with Lyndon Johnson. It was hard to get out of his presence sometimes. When he had got mad at you, then you *couldn't* get away because he spent so much time indirectly making up for it.

John Gardner: He was known as the most political of men. When he was searching for a successor to Anthony Celebrezze as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, a Washington friend said to me, "Whoever it turns out to be, you may be sure he will be a loyal Democrat and a seasoned politician. HEW distributes billions of dollars a year and it must be in the hands of one of the party faithful. A politician like LBJ will see to that." Well, I'm a Republican and I knew nothing about politics, but I ended up in the job. I read that Lyndon Johnson was tricky and not to be trusted. He dealt straight with me, and I trusted him. He was quick with backing when we needed it. The rougher the weather, the more likely he was there supporting you. He was built for rough weather.

George Christian: I have been associated with political figures for more than 40 years, and I really believe I can spot a phony when I see one. There was nothing phony about Lyndon Johnson. He wanted to be the best President ever, and he worked at it night and day with his whole body and his whole soul. And he believed in what he was doing.

Douglass Cater: He was a man who let it all hang out, especially to those whom he trusted.

**Jack Valenti:** He was an awesome engine of a man, and you and I in this room will never again see his like...I frankly didn't understand him. I loved him, and I followed him, but I sure as hell didn't fathom all that made him tick.

Bill Moyers: I haven't figured him out all these years later. The least understood quality of his often unfathomable character was that he retained his moral imagination despite having been a man who rose to the top in a game where you do not get there on the wings of truth or conscience. When he got to the top he questioned the very institutions that [had helped him] rise to the top. He was obligated to Brown and Root, but he wasn't owned by Brown and Root. He came out of a racist culture, but he wasn't a servant of it. He adopted the southern wing of the congressional party and yet he was never its instrument. I didn't find him a very compassionate man. But he had a moral imagination and that was the ability to see life as it was lived by people who didn't have access to the success that he did: blacks, poor, women and others.

**Joe Califano:** Whatever his warts—and they were abundant — this President tried to appeal to the good nature of the American people.

Bill Moyers: From this man [called] ugly and mean came a program, a philosophy, a purpose that transcended what we knew about him...To me the question of Lyndon Johnson is: How could a man as flawed as any human vessel ever made rouse a nation to reach beyond itself?



# The Specter at the Feast

As John Connally pointed out, when the conference was planned "it was not anticipated that *Means of Ascent*, by Robert Caro, would have been published and would be in the public domain. Yet it now is, and I'm sure it's in the minds of a great many who are here."

And to be sure, that book, with what is generally accepted as its unflattering portrait of LBJ, was something of a specter at the feast.

Many of the participants came prepared to have their say. The most outspoken was Jack Valenti. "Every Caro word," he said, "is dipped in curare. The cards are marked, the deck is stacked." Douglass Cater posed the question: How do we square our memories of LBJ with the opinions of those "who believed that he personified everything that was mean and ugly?"

Bill Moyers replied that Johnson's "most scornful critics never met him, never listened to him and have relied mostly on hearsay and the stories about him that grow with exaggeration and enthusiasm down through the years."

Leading the "In Search of LBJ" group oral history at the Library, Connally asked Bill Deason, who had known Johnson from college days, if



Ed Clark: "I did not know that Coke Stevenson was a saint."

he agreed with Caro's "unflattering book that [said] Johnson had a bottomless capacity for deceit and for deception and for betrayal..."

"No," Deason replied, "Caro just missed the boat completely." Why didn't Caro "see the same man you knew?" Deason's answer: "He is trying to sell a book."

Others did recognize some of the Johnson characteristics depicted by Caro, but said they were balanced by more favorable qualities which do not show up in Caro's portrait. Connally, whose personal and professional lives were intertwined with LBJ's since the 1930s, said: "There were many unpleasant things in Johnson's makeup. But there were good things, too, and Caro ignored them completely. He gave a dark twist to everything Johnson did."

Connally bore down even harder on Caro's charge that Johnson "stole" the 1948 Senate race from his opponent, Coke Stevenson. The charge,



Donald Thomas: "Mr. Caro never left any word that he had any desire to speak with me."

said Connally, who was Johnson's campaign manager that year, is "not true. That's an unfair statement..." If Caro had said "there were a number of illegal votes cast in various parts of the state for both candidates...and that Johnson's 87 votes might well have been the result of some illegally cast votes, that might or might not have been a true statement." Johnson's forces knew it was going to be a close race, he said, but "frankly...we thought we had won by 357 votes, not 87."

Donald Thomas, who was a young lawyer at the time working in the law firm representing Johnson, confirmed Connally's recollections. He remembered Connally saying the night of the election: "We've got this damn thing won if they don't steal it from us. And the only way to keep them from stealing from us is they can't know how many votes we've got." Connally then, according to Thomas, called all the campaign leaders and told them not to release

the vote count in their areas until he told them to. "And that scheduling of released votes," Thomas said, "continued from Saturday night until the following week, when the 87 votes were declared."



John Connally: "An unfair and untrue statement."

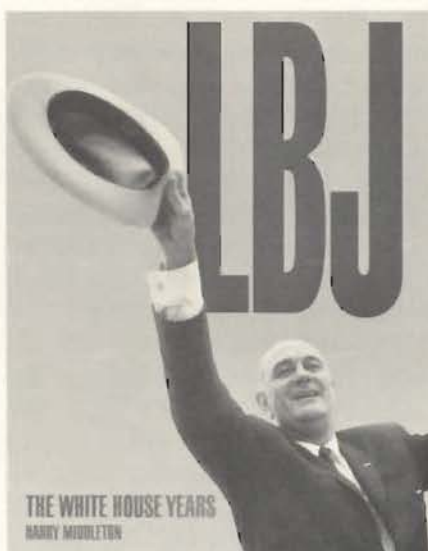
With Caro's allegations under discussion, Connally brought up Caro's charge from his earlier book, *The Path to Power*, that Johnson "betrayed" Speaker Sam Rayburn by refusing to join Rayburn's and the Texas delegation's support of John Nance Garner's bid for the presidency in 1940, in order to wrest from Rayburn the leadership of the Democratic forces in Texas.

Former Congressman Ray Roberts, who was on Rayburn's staff at the time, disputed the charge. "I know that the action that LBJ took was after full concurrence of Speaker Sam Rayburn," he said. "He encouraged him." Connally agreed. "I don't think he betrayed the Speaker at all. I think the Speaker knew exactly what Johnson's position was..."

It was Caro's depiction of Johnson's "motivation" that most troubled several of the participants. "Throughout the Caro book, first volume and second," said Warren Woodward, "it was power, power, power...The notion that [Johnson] was consumed by [an ambition for] power is not accurate...He saw that it was necessary to have power [to] accomplish the things that he accomplished." Joe Califano expressed the concern another way when he was asked about the Caro book in Washington. "What's totally missing from the Caro material," he said, "is any sense of what drove this man—of the vision that he had."



**LBJ: The White House Years**, with pictures taken by Yoichi Okamoto and his team of photographers, and text by Harry Middleton, was published by Harry Abrams, Inc., to coincide with the 25th Anniversary activities. Some of the photos also serve as the material for an exhibition sponsored by the International Center of Photography. The exhibit opened at I.C.P. in New York City in May and will travel to other institutions across the country.



Paula Okamoto (above), widow of the chief White House photographer of the Johnson White House, attended the exhibit opening at I.C.P. in New York.



Left: Mrs. Johnson greets Harry Middleton after a presentation he made on his book to Friends of the LBJ Library.



Two images from the book and the exhibit: LBJ listening to a taped report from Vietnam made by his Marine son-in-law, Charles Robb (left), and (below) the Johnsons in retirement. (This photo was taken by Frank Wolfe.)





## Other Events at the Library



Christopher H. Foreman, Jr., was winner of this year's D. B. Hardeman Prize for his *Signals From the Hill*, which examines the impact of congressional oversight on social regulation by government agencies. Foreman, a Research Associate at the Brookings Institution, spoke at the Library to a group which included the committee members—Lewis Gould, Barbara Jordan and Melissa Collie—who every two years select as prize winner the author of the best book on the Congress written in that period.



Friends of the LBJ Library were invited to An Evening With...Jim Cooke, doing his one-man show on Calvin Coolidge (top left) ...Secretary of Education Lauro F. Cavazos (middle left)...George W. Bush, oldest son of the President (left)...and U.T. Professor William Stott (center), who traced political influence on musical comedy in recent times.



# Special Exhibition Displays State Gifts

The Library's current special exhibition is titled "Head of State Gifts: Symbols of Diplomacy." It is a selection of some 50 objects—presents given to the 36th President of the United States and members of his family—from 29 foreign nations. Most of these objects, all of them of great artistic interest and value, are being shown for the first time.

The tradition of Heads of State exchanging gifts as an exercise of diplomacy is as old as written history.

Today a U. S. President accepts gifts on behalf of the American people and often uses them ceremonially or displays them in the White House during his administration. When he leaves office they remain the property of the government.

All of the state gifts given to the Johnsons are housed in the LBJ Library.

The exhibition will continue through September 16.







Photos on these pages by Pat Burchfield



The Volunteer program at the Library celebrated its 10th anniversary this spring. Kathy Crowley, who organized the program and is now Public Relations Director for Southern Union Gas, returned for the occasion. At right, (fourth from left) she meets with founding members Ione Young, Norma Brandt, Sally Muehlberger, Jessie McGrew and Helen Frantz. (Not present: Carol Johnson and Pat Caton.) Below, Ms. Crowley and Larry Reed talk to one of the volunteers.



Library supervisors meet with Mrs. Johnson at the LBJ Ranch, as they do every year, to brief her on Library activities and plans.





The Board of Directors of the LBJ Foundation met at the Library for its annual meeting the day after the Austin activities in May. New members elected (right) were J. B. Fuqua, President of Fuqua Industries, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, (top); Major General U.S.A. (Ret) Hugh Robinson, former military aide to President Johnson and now Chairman of The Tetra Group of Dallas, Texas, and Vernon Jordan, Washington, D. C. attorney, who earlier served as President of the National Urban League. Chairman Tom Johnson (left) presided. U.T. President William Cunningham, flanked by Larry Temple and Luci Johnson (below) makes a point. Other members of the Board attending were Joe Allbritton, Perry Bass, George Christian, Clark Clifford, Henry Fowler, Lady Bird Johnson, Arthur Krim, Harry Middleton, Lynda Robb, Max Sherman, Jack Valenti and Lew Wasserman. Not present: Mary Lasker and Bob Strauss.





# A Postscript to the Celebration

"Hopefully," Jim Gaither wrote after he returned to San Francisco, the symposium made "a meaningful contribution to the history of that period." Many others wrote or telephoned in the same vein. "I think we made a real record," Orville Freeman said.

The sentiments bespeak a hope widely shared by all who have resented the raw deal President Johnson has been getting and have been frustrated by an apparent inability to do anything about it. The reunions and the symposium gave a lift to beleaguered spirits and an encouragement to believe that they would help to balance the scales.

It won't be easy. An entrenched hostility to LBJ pervades some of the media. A New York newspaper reviewer reporting on the photo exhibition at the International Center for Photography (see page 18) complained that the "image of Johnson portrayed throughout the exhibit...is at radical odds with the portrait of venality and chicanery meticulously traced by Robert A. Caro..." What kind of photographs, one wonders, would satisfy someone who believes that the only real Johnson is Caro's creature of "venality and chicanery"? (Even Caro, in a moment of fair-mindedness, might point out that his "meticulously traced" portrait was of an earlier LBJ. But then again, perhaps not. In the first volume of his series, after all, Caro told us that Johnson "came out of the Hill Country *formed*, shaped—into a shape so hard it would never change"—frozen for the ages, as Douglass Cater once put it, like Little Orphan Annie.) The reviewer, moreover, stepping into what might be considered a field outside art criticism, flatly declared that "the projected Great Society never materialized."

Would he have felt challenged, his conviction shaken even a little bit, had he attended the symposium and heard the testimonies of Sargent Shriver, Bill Moyers, Nick Katzenbach, Vernon Jordan, Barbara Jordan? It's hard to believe that any listener would not have been moved. But it's also hard to ignore that reservoir of animosity that helped give Caro's book its receptive audience. Although faulting Caro for re-hashing old material and presenting it as new, and for foolishly canonizing Coke Stevenson, Robert Sherrill, reviewing the book in the *Texas Observer*, readily admits: "[It] is filled with even more hatred than the first [volume]. I happen to like that. No politician ever deserved our hatred more than Johnson..."

A disheartening realization for those of us who still wish to be identified as liberals is that most of the animus comes from liberal writers. Conservative columnist George Will reflected on this anomaly: "Johnson was a bullying vulgarian, often crudely unethical, sometimes corrupt. He also was the most potent promoter of the liberal agenda since Franklin Roosevelt. Reality is often messy that way, and perhaps something in the liberal mentality has trouble coming to terms with such untidiness."

Of course the symposium had its limitations. First of all, it focused exclusively—and deliberately—on domestic programs. (Future conferences on foreign affairs, including Vietnam, are now being planned.) And then, as Tom Wicker wrote: "a conclave of old Johnson hands...is not the place for a final judgement on the Great Society or Lyndon Johnson." But did it, as Gaither hoped, make a contribution? I believe it did. Wicker, who after his keynote address stayed to hear the rest of the conference, also wrote: "...The

gathering did restore a useful perspective—a number of great achievements, some lasting, were registered; many Americans were given hope, help and a chance they would not otherwise have had; government was made to function powerfully and well until a divisive war shattered the Johnson 'consensus.' "

So we will go ahead with our plans to publish the symposium in the perhaps naive but well-intentioned hope that that complicated and mysterious process called "history" will be obliged, in its pursuit of Lyndon Johnson, to listen to the voices of some of those who knew him and saw good in him, and who still respect, a quarter century later, the causes he fought for and the spirit that moved him, in Moyers' phrase, to "rouse a nation."

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Short of that, was it all worth the effort? Of course it was. The letters after both the Washington and Austin events have attested to that. They have all spoken of the warmth, the camaraderie, the old memories of a time well remembered. To be sure, it was "we happy few," as Jack Valenti characterized us, preaching to the choir. How could it have been otherwise? Only the singers came. Those off-key, if many there be, stayed away. Joe Califano, less Shakespearean than Valenti, gave the text: "For all the tragedy and disappointments, for all the excitement and engagement and achievement—and, yes, for all the infernal frustration of working for a man who pushed you to the limits of your mental, emotional and physical endurance from early every morning to late every night and then had the balls to ask for more—for all of that, to most of us the Johnson years were the most productive and exciting of our lives."

It was worth remembering.

—Harry Middleton

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